

Conference Report

Wadsworth, PGA Tour honored

BY MARK LESLIE

The PGA Tour and golf course builder Brent Wadsworth were honored at the annual banquet of the Golf Course Builders of America during the 61st International Golf Course Conference and Show in Orlando, Fla., Feb. 24.

The GCBA cited the PGA Tour's "contribution to the growth of the golf industry" through development of its Tournament Players Club courses around the country. Golf Course News presented Wadsworth, president of Wadsworth Construction Co. of Plainfield, Ill., its first annual Golf Course Builder of the Year award.

Bobby Weed, PGA Tour chief designer, accepted the GCBA award from GCBA President Perry Dye and on behalf of Commissioner Deane



Builder of the Year Brent Wadsworth, center, with Golf Course News Publisher Charles E. von Brecht, left, and Golf Course Builders of America President Perry Dye.

R. Beman, and expressed optimism for the future of golf.

"Everyone here's got to be just beaming ... with optimism about the next decade," Weed said. "Since Deane became commissioner in 1974 he has added to (golf's) exposure with the regular PGA Tour in the '70s, the Senior Tour in the '80s,

the upcoming Hogan Tour in the '90s, the Tournament Players Clubs, and we're now getting into some public golf."

Weed said: "There's a lot of room for growth... We're all looking forward to the '90s, and with everything we've got going on internationally—in Europe, in Japan, the Far East—

there is a lot of opportunity out there."

Saying that the various segments of the industry are all allies, he added, "There are all the problems upcoming in the '90s, but I'm sure, as long as we stick together, we can overcome any obstacle."

Since the first TPC course — at Sawgrass, Fla. — opened 10 years ago, 13 others have opened in the United States. Another six are in various stages of planning and construction in this country, and another is planned in Bato, Japan.

Charles von Brecht, publisher of Golf Course News, presented the cherry wood clock plaque to Wadsworth, whose company was the overwhelming choice as the best builder of 1989 in a national survey of architects.

Wadsworth thanked his employees around the country "whose efforts allowed us to attain this award" and the architects.

He praised the work of the Golf Course Builders of America and added that his own firm had recently joined.

Also at the dinner, American Society of Golf Course Architects outgoing president, Robert Trent Jones Jr., told the builders: "We admire you. We just design the courses. You're out there and have to live with these (regulatory) conditions. We often admire you for your helpful and responsible work and we look forward to working with you in the future, helping our country to be green and our sport, a grand and glorious game, to continue to grow."

Builders

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Rossi said that in the 1960s the Farmers Home Administration was responsible for 250 to 300 golf courses being built in rural areas.

"Yes, if we're going to have any growth at all in public golf, the municipalities and county governments have to take a lead because land is so expensive," he said.

Builders Association

The Golf Course Builders Association will do everything within its power to improve the situation, from adding educational programs for builders to joining the industrywide Allied Association of Golf and the Task Force on Environmental Concerns, promised Rossi.

"We now have 21 people on our board of directors. All are leaders in the industry and are going to work hard to quadruple our membership in the next two years," Rossi said. "We hope to have over 200 members in two years — all builders, suppliers, associate members. The 58 members at the annual meeting were eager to contribute their time and money to make sure builders make our contribution to the game."

Dye said GCBA membership grew 26 percent last year and forecasted a bright future.

"It took a couple of years to convince the industry that there was a need. Take the total aggregate in dollars of the industry. Golf courses cost from \$2 million to \$5 million to build, times 150 to 200 per year, and it's a billion-dollar industry. And there aren't many billion-dollar industries that don't have some sort of policing group."

He said that previously there was "no need for a policing group because, frankly, it wasn't that bad."

But times, and competency, have changed, he said, and the GCBA's role should be to certify and educate builders. Opponents of golf courses are "entrenched," Dye said.

"They have some reasons that they're there and one of them is abuses by some of the industries. It's our job to position ourselves so that

Global spearhead

The Golf Course Builders of America will make international inroads this year. The European market is opening up, President Perry Dye said, and GCBA expects to send a representative to Europe as it strives for recognition as "the international spearhead" for builders.

"Golf is an international, exportable quantity for us. We have a great amount of American product whether it be technology as simple as irrigation or drainage ... because we in the United States are the industry leader," Dye said.

"With (the association's executive director) working a little in Europe and me spending a lot of my time in the Pacific Rim, I'd like to try to bring as many international people here as possible.

"I think you'll see Americans going overseas in consulting roles — whether it be architects, irrigation experts, builders, agronomists — everybody in our industry. The question becomes: How do you make that happen? One thing you have to do is bring those people over here to show them that our product is superior and to help develop the European taste and the Oriental taste to our style of management in golf operations."

we're not abusive. That's where the education and certification comes into play," he added.

"I think with our new board of directors and new subcommittees, that will be the first thing they'll try to establish. You have to set up certain requirements and you become judgmental about people in the industry. But I think it's time to become judgmental about one another," Dye said.

Dye said the organization will now meet twice a year and have regionalized meetings to improve communication.

"That's the key," he said. "The United States is so big and most of

the people in the construction business are regional because of equipment-moving costs. To try to tie east to west and north to south is quite difficult because ... the rules are very different in each region and the costs are very different in each region."

He said the GCBA can "pull some standardizations together, but they will be very regional in nature. They have to be because it's much different building a golf course in Florida than it is in Arizona..."

The Alliance

Dye believes the \$4-billion-a-year golf industry should have a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. That could be the next step for the Allied Association of Golf.

Rossi said the new group will be "tremendously important" to all segments of the industry as they strive "to enhance the processes to get through all the restrictions.

"We all want the same thing: build more golf courses for more people."

"The American Society of Golf Course Architects and the National Club Association have taken the lead in this effort and should be complimented for their efforts," Rossi said.

He pointed toward another important upcoming event, Golf Summit '90, a planning session in November for the industry to devise a plan to achieve goals set for golf.

Rossi also called for the 8 percent of the public who are avid golfers to "make themselves known."


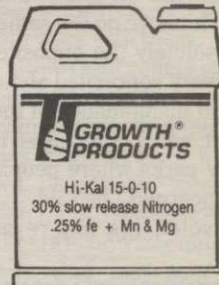


"They need to speak out that golf is the one sport you can play longer than others, like tennis. It's a family game, a game that you can play from 8 to 80 and enjoy it," Rossi said. "It's been said that if the good Lord developed a better game than golf, He kept it for Himself.

"There's no doubt in my mind that golf is going through its biggest boom, but it needs all the help it can get from the media... from governmental agencies, from financial institutions, from people outside the industry who want the game to grow because it is a wholesome recreational activity."

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